A

SERMON,

PREACHED AT

MONKWELL STREET MEETING-HOUSE,

OCTOBER 16th, 1796,

ON OCCASION OF THE DEATH OF

DR. JAMES FORDYCE,

FORMERLY PASTOR OF THE CONGREGATION WORSHIPPING IN THAT PLACE,

Who died at BATH, October 1st, aged 76.

By JAMES LINDSAY.

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1797.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Author of the following Sermon, owing to the duties of a laborious employment, in addition to thoſe of his Chriſtian miniſtry, has leſs time than he could wiſh, to beſtow upon his pulpit compoſitions;—much too little for the production of any thing, which, acting upon his own judgment only, he would be diſpoſed to ſubmit to the public eye. In the preſent caſe, he complies readily and cheerfully with the requeſt of the ſociety in Monkwell Street, who wiſh, by the publication of this ſermon, to pay, in common with its author, a tribute of unfeigned reſpect to the memory of their late venerable paſtor.

The publication has been delayed from no other cauſe, but the deſire and expectation of being able to furniſh Dr. Fordyce's friends with a more detailed, and more ſatisfactory account of his life. This expectation has been diſappointed.

Several

Several years ago, a clergyman in Holland intended to publiſh, in Dutch, a complete edition of the Doctor's works, ſome of which had been tranſlated before into that language. Application was made, through the author, to the Doctor, for a ſhort memoir to be prefixed to the tranſlation. But owing to the clergyman's death, the work did not go on, and the author never received the memoir. It was hoped, that it might have been found among his papers, and through the goodneſs of Mrs. Fordyce repeated ſearch has been made with that view; but hitherto in vain. The ſermon appears, therefore, in the ſame defective ſtate in which it was preached, with the addition only of a few ſentences relative to the Doctor's ſituation at Alloa.

The author wiſhes, that it had been in every reſpect more worthy of the occaſion. Such as it is, he commends it to the candour of Dr. Fordyce's friends and his own, for whom it is chiefly intended, and by whom chiefly, perhaps excluſively, it will be read.

Newington Green,
January 12th, 1797.

A SERMON.

A SERMON.

1 Theſſalonians, v. 12, 13.

And we beſeech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admoniſh you; and to eſteem them very highly for their works ſake.

EVERY inſtitution, divine as well as human, is miſapplied, and vitiated by the perverſe ingenuity of man. Perhaps the abuſe of things that are good may be permitted for a ſeaſon, with a view to impreſs a more general, and more laſting conviction of their excellence and utility. Perhaps temporary and partial corruption may be the great medium through which providence is advancing to general purification and permanent refinement. As in the vegetable world decay and putrefaction are the certain forerunners of

renovated beauty and invigorated health, ſo ignorance, and error, and vice, which conſtitute the decay of intellectual and moral life, may be a neceſſary, though in our view a mortifying ~~ſtop~~, to its progreſſive improvement, and ultimate perfection.

Chriſtianity, as it came from the hands of its great author, was a pure and conſolatory ſcheme of divine truth, and exalted virtue. It was of all religions the moſt ſimple both in its doctrine and worſhip; and it was of all religions the moſt graciouſly adapted to the infirmities and neceſſities of a frail and guilty creature. But, owing to various circumſtances in the ſtate of thoſe times, which followed the firſt ages of the goſpel, its beauty was ſoon defaced, and its genuine tendency greatly obſtructed. In the progreſs of that barbariſm, which overran the Roman empire, the plain doctrines of Chriſt were perverted into a ſyſtem of metaphyſical dogmas; and its ſpiritual, edifying worſhip into a round of pompous ceremonies and lifeleſs forms. Its miniſters too, who, according to apoſtolic appointment, were humble teachers, and comforters of the people, claiming no authority, but that which aroſe

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from the worth of their characters, and the aſſiduity of their labours, and exerciſing even that in no other way but in healing diviſions, promoting harmony, and advancing the temporal peace, and everlaſting ſalvation of their reſpective flocks;—theſe miniſters, thus lowly like their Maſter, and thus devoted to the great work which he came into the world to accompliſh, were ſucceeded, too ſoon, alas! by men of a very different ſpirit, who ſought principally, not the glory of God, and the intereſt of his Son's religion, but their own vain-glory, and the advancement of their own worldly views. In proportion as theſe men gradually eſtabliſhed their influence over an ignorant and deluded multitude, they ſet up claims to a ſpiritual dominion, as extravagant in themſelves, as they were inconſiſtent with the ſpirit, and inimical to the deſign of genuine Chriſtianity. That, which in its origin was a humble miniſtry, ſoon became an arrogant prieſthood, in its nature the moſt malignant, and in its effect the moſt pernicious, that ever degraded and diſgraced humanity.

Uniting itſelf with, and becoming ſubſervient to the civil power, it contributed

greatly to the eſtabliſhment, and prolongation of civil deſpotiſm; and by availing itſelf of circumſtances as they occurred, it gradually obtained an empire of its own, ſuperior to that of the civil magiſtrate, more extenſive, and more terrible, than that of any tyrant upon earth. No wonder that a ſyſtem, which was thus formidable in the plenitude of its power, and which, even in its preſent mitigated ſtate is ſo miſ-ſhapen and ſo injurious to the intereſts of ſociety, ſhould excite the indignation, and draw down the reproaches of enlightened minds. The wonder is, that there ſhould be found a mind at this day, and a mind too of no ordinary attainments, capable of palliating, by ſpecious apology, the enormities of ſuch a ſyſtem, and of endeavouring to prop up its tottering remains by ingenious ſophiſtry and ſplendid declamation. Theſe remains have indeed been too long ſupported, though not without ſome difficulty, by the efforts of intereſt and ambition on one ſide, by the credulity and tameneſs of ignorance on the other. But no power, however great, no talents, however ſplendid, can ſupport them much longer in any country. The foundations have long been

been ſapped, and the ſuperſtructure, even now, "is nodding to its fall." Not only is the day of Popiſh ſuperſtition haſtening to an end; but we may venture to foretell, without the ſpirit of prophecy, that even the leſs exceptionable eſtabliſhments of religion, if they are not ſoon reformed, will be ſoon deſtroyed. Chriſtianity will then be left to its own ſtrength, unincumbered by that worldly policy with which it has been forced into an unnatural connexion. Thus left, it will ſtand firm upon the ſtrong ground of its intrinſic excellence, without any external aid but the voluntary aid of thoſe individuals, who, embracing it from conviction, will ſupport it from choice, with the honeſt deſire of promoting at once their own ſpiritual improvement, and the higheſt intereſts of mankind. When this era ſhall arrive, the miniſters of Chriſt, inſtead of arrogant prieſts, affecting, as prieſts ever have affected, to act as mediators between the people and the objects of their worſhip *, will become, as they originally were,

* It is well known that this mediatorial power has been claimed, and exerciſed, by prieſts of all religions. They

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were, humble inſtructors, and zealous monitors, to guide men into the way of truth, and urge them to the practice of their duty. They

have all pretended to avert the diſpleaſure, or to conciliate the favour of their reſpective Deities by ſome myſterious virtue, either in the prieſthood itſelf, or in thoſe rites and ceremonies which prieſts alone could perform. It is eaſy to conceive, that ſuch a claim, wherever it is admitted, muſt be accompanied with an almoſt unbounded aſcendant over the minds and conſciences of men. And when we conſider the incalculable miſchiefs which it has occaſioned to the world, we need not wonder, that it was one of our Saviour's principal objects to aboliſh prieſthood in all its forms, and to teach a religion in which prieſts are not only unneceſſary, but inadmiſſible. Having died for the ſins of the world, he is repreſented as becoming in conſequence the only mediator between God and man, by whoſe death even the Jewiſh prieſthood was ſet aſide, and through whoſe mediation every man, without diſtinction, was to have free acceſs by one ſpirit to God the Father; i. e. every man was to be prieſt for himſelf, not depending for the efficacy of his religious ſervices upon particular places, or a particular deſcription of people appointed to perform them in his ſtead; but upon his own performance of them in ſpirit and in truth.

'The hour cometh,' ſaid our Lord to the woman of Samaria, 'when ye ſhall neither worſhip the Father in this mountain, nor yet at Jeruſalem,' neither in places or by perſons peculiarly and excluſively appropriated to religi-

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They will nouriſh the people with the bread of life, and the people will reward them with a ſufficiency of the bread that periſheth, and with that honour, and affection, which to

ous offices; 'but the true worſhippers ſhall worſhip the Father in ſpirit and in truth; for the Father ſeeketh ſuch to worſhip him.' Under the Chriſtian, indeed under any ſcheme, men muſt learn the principles of religion and morals, if they learn them at all, from teachers properly qualified to inſtruct them. But for their intercourſe with the Divinity—for the acceptance of their religious ſervices, whether private or public, they depend on no man; nor is the intervention of any man neceſſary, farther than as it may be fit, for the ſake of decency and order, that in public worſhip ſome individual ſhould act as the mouth, but by no means as the mediator, of the congregation.

This is ſo manifeſtly the plan of the Goſpel, that any perſon who reads the New Teſtament impartially, may be juſtly aſtoniſhed to find the very name of prieſt in uſe in the Chriſtian church, except in reference to an office aboliſhed. And how muſt his aſtoniſhment increaſe when he obſerves, that not only the name, but too much of the thing, ſtill exiſts in every part of Europe? This is the ſtone of offence at which ſo many ſtumble. When it is completely removed, the prejudices to which it has given riſe will gradually ſubſide. Chriſtianity will then be ſeen in its original ſimplicity and beauty; and being thus ſeen, it will command the reſpect, and gain the love, of every candid and ingenuous mind.

a generous ſpirit is much more precious. Even now this is the caſe with thoſe who have a perſonal experience of the utility, and juſt views of the importance of a Chriſtian miniſtry. But whilſt we admit and rejoice that this is true, it muſt be acknowledged, on the other hand, that a very general prejudice is ſpreading, both againſt Chriſtianity itſelf, and againſt every deſcription of its public teachers. Amidſt that fermentation of ſpirit which precedes, and may perhaps be neceſſary for the overthrow of error and ſuperſtition, truth itſelf is unhappily expoſed to the ſhock of contending parties; and for a time ſhe ſuffers almoſt equally from the bigotted ſupporters of ancient abuſe, and the outrageous advocates of violent innovation. It is impoſſible not to lament the injury which ſhe ſuſtains, and which ſuffering humanity ſuſtains with her.

But let this be our conſolation, that ſhe will come forth from the controverſy, like gold from the furnace, purified and exalted. The more ſhe is tried, the more glorious and permanent will her triumph be. In the mean while it is eaſy to account for the prevalence

valence of that enmity to the goſpel, and its public teachers, by the operation of which this trial will be made.

Men are too ready at all times, and at thoſe times more eſpecially, when the ſpirit of innovation is abroad in the world, to judge of inſtitutions rather by the evils which have incidentally ariſen from them, than by a careful, and candid examination of their original deſign, and genuine tendency. Thoſe who have been accuſtomed to view Chriſtianity and its miniſters through no other medium than that of the abſurd, and ſuperſtitious eſtabliſhments, with which they have been unhappily connected, ſee little in them but folly and miſchief. And without inquiring, whether theſe are owing to an incurable defect in the original inſtitution, or to that miſapplication and abuſe to which every inſtitution is liable, they haſten to paſs an undiſtinguiſhing ſentence, not only againſt the abuſe, which they ſee, but againſt the inſtitution itſelf, the nature and deſign of which they have not inveſtigated.

This appears to me to be a very common proceſs of judgment among thoſe men, unfortunately much too numerous, in our own

as well as other countries, who involve what they call prieſts of every religion in one common condemnation; who, becauſe incorporated prieſts have done much evil, will not believe it poſſible that religious teachers of any deſcription, or in any circumſtances, can do good. I had almoſt called theſe men philoſophers; for they are forward to put in an excluſive claim to that honourable appellation. But are ſuch haſty judgments, and indiſcriminate charges the proper indications of a philoſophic mind? Are they not rather the proper effects of that ſpirit of prejudice which philoſophy diſclaims, and which theſe pretenders to philoſophy are the firſt and loudeſt to condemn? That man only deſerves the name of philoſopher, who, having tried all things by ſober and candid inveſtigation, holds faſt that, which he thinks beſt; who does not overlook or deſpiſe what is good, even in thoſe ſyſtems which are fundamentally vicious; who makes ample allowance for individuals acting conſcientiouſly under the very worſt, however they may err both in judgment and practice, and who even in attempting to overturn ſuch ſyſtems by the uſe of reaſon and fair argument,

gument, reſpects, wherever he can, the character and views of thoſe who ſupport them. This is the ſpirit of philoſophy. Is it the ſpirit of thoſe, who purſue with indiſcriminate obloquy every ſcheme of Chriſtian doctrine, and every denomination of Chriſtian miniſters? Were I to judge from my own experience, I ſhould anſwer in the negative. But be this as it may, it is the part of a wiſe man to exerciſe the underſtanding which God has given him, without regard to the opinion of others. This is all that we require in the caſe before us. We do not wiſh to prejudge the queſtion. We do not wiſh you to eſteem your guides for their works ſake, till you are firſt convinced, that both the work itſelf, and the temper and views with which it is performed, are worthy of your eſtimation. I ſay the temper and views with which it is performed; for with reſpect to the actual performance, it is ſo imperfect in the beſt, as to require much humility on our part, and much candour on yours.

Now what the ſpirit and temper ought to be, we learn from many parts of the New Teſtament, particularly from Paul's epiſtles

to Timothy, Titus, and the Corinthians. When you look into theſe, you will be filled with juſt aſtoniſhment at the claims, which have been ſo impudently advanced by an arrogant prieſthood, and ſo ſtupidly admitted by an ignorant people. You will find that even the firſt Chriſtian teachers, endowed as they were with ſupernatural gifts, were not to be lords over Chriſt's heritage, but enſamples to his flock; not to have dominion over their faith, but to be helpers of their joy. They were indeed to exhort, admoniſh, and rebuke with the zeal of piety, and the authority of truth, but they were at the ſame time to be 'gentle to all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekneſs inſtructing even thoſe who oppoſed themſelves.' They were ſincerely to divide the word of truth, and to be intrepid, but prudent, in defending it, to whatever ſufferings it might expoſe them. At the ſame time they were to become all things to all men, where compliance was either uſeful or innocent. In performing the duties of their office, they were to diſcover a ſpirit erect and diſintereſted, not courting popular applauſe, not fearing popular reproach, deſirous only of pleaſing the people for their good, to edification, and

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of commending themſelves to every man's conſcience in the ſight of God. Though they had, as Paul inſiſts, a reaſonable claim to temporal ſupport from thoſe, who were inſtructed and comforted by their ſpiritual labours, yet were they to be cautious of going, in this reſpect, to the full extent of their juſt right, leſt they ſhould incur the imputation of making gain of godlineſs;—an imputation unhappily incurred by too many, who have been their ſucceſſors in name; but in practice and character every thing that is moſt oppoſite. Such then was the temper and ſuch the conduct warmly recommended by the apoſtles to the miniſters of the goſpel, and beautifully exemplified by themſelves, and their immediate followers. Now, without inquiring at preſent, whether Chriſtianity be true or falſe, let us take for granted, what even infidelity will hardly deny, that it contains at leaſt ſome important truth, and much excellent morality, and that it may therefore contribute to the virtue of the individual, and to the order and happineſs of ſociety. If this be admitted, it will follow, that Chriſtianity ſhould be taught; and it may be difficult perhaps to point out any mode, by which it may be taught with

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more general and better effect, than by the appointment of ſuch teachers as the New Teſtament deſcribes; men who, with a ſpirit thus meek and unaſſuming, thus dignified and generous, thus ſuperior to worldly intereſt and worldly aggrandizement, will conſcientiouſly devote their time, their talents, and their labours, to the religious inſtruction, and moral improvement of the people. We acknowledge that ſuch men, in the latter ages of the church, have not been numerous. Whilſt the Chriſtian miniſtry is cloſely connected with ſyſtems of civil policy, and objects of worldly ambition, they never will be numerous. But the leſs numerous the more valuable. If the inſtitution has unfortunately degenerated, even where it is moſt pure; if it be no longer the ſame, that it was in the earlieſt and beſt ages of the church, either in the mode of inſtruction, or in the ſpirit and character of the inſtructors, that is not the fault of Chriſtianity. It is the fault of human nature, acted upon, and debaſed by a vicious ſtate of human ſociety, and by other cauſes, which we cannot here enumerate. But this conſideration, inſtead of being an argument againſt the neceſſity and utility of

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the inſtitution itſelf, ſhould be, and with every candid mind will be, an argument for endeavouring to rectify any abuſe that may have been connected with it, and to render it more conformable to its original ſpirit and deſign.

You may think me perhaps unneceſſarily anxious about eſtabliſhing a point, which is not doubted in this congregation. I am perſuaded, that, with reſpect to moſt of you, this anxiety is unneceſſary. On the other hand, you will do me the juſtice to believe, that it does not proceed from a deſire of exalting the importance of the miniſterial office in general, for the ſake of any ſmall ſhare of reſpect, which it may procure to myſelf as an individual. To the rational reſpect of good men I am not indifferent; but as a teacher of religion, I ought to have a higher aim. When I obſerve the temper of the times, and the rapid ſpread of infidelity, eſpecially among the young; when I think of the means that are employed by a certain deſcription of men, both in writing and in converſation, to inſtil prejudices againſt all religion into minds yet inexperienced and fond of novel opinions; when I reflect that theſe minds, incapable of forming

forming a ſerious and deliberate judgment from ſober and candid inquiry, are eaſily impreſſed by bold aſſertion, and eaſily miſled by ſpecious reaſoning; and when I conſider that one of the moſt common, and moſt plauſible topics employed againſt Chriſtianity, is the abuſe and condemnation of its miniſters without diſtinction of party or character;—when theſe things preſs upon my thoughts, can I but be anxious—who that regards the intereſt of religion and the happineſs of youth but muſt be anxious, to obviate, as much as poſſible, this ſpreading evil; to guard theſe inexperienced minds againſt imbibing prejudices, which are thus aſſiduouſly diſſeminated, and which too often preclude all farther inquiry? I cannot but feel the importance of exhorting youth to examine fairly the truth and excellence of Chriſtianity, independently of thoſe antichriſtian eſtabliſhments of it, which have defaced its beauty and obſtructed its influence, and to conſider the utility of a goſpel miniſtry, as its nature and deſign are to be collected from the New Teſtament, without being biaſed by the defects or vices of thoſe who have been, or who now are employed in that office.

Hitherto we have attributed to Chriſtianity

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no other excellence, than that which even liberal infidels admit, namely, that it recommends an exalted morality by principles, which it holds, in common with natural religion. But to thoſe who are rooted and grounded in the faith of the goſpel, and have known the happy effects of evangelical truths and evangelical ordinances, we may now addreſs a different language. You believe, that Chriſtianity has other and higher claims upon our veneration; that it is the power of God and the wiſdom of God for the ſalvation of frail and guilty creatures; that it is a revelation from heaven, which unfolds and illuſtrates the plans of Providence relative to man; which teaches him from authority his duty and his deſtination; which, by the influence of its doctrines and promiſes upon the heart and underſtanding, is calculated to improve his moral nature, and to redeem his ſoul from ſin and death. With regard to its effects, he muſt have read hiſtory either with inattention or prejudice, who will not acknowledge, that, in ſpite of all the corruptions, too numerous, alas! with which it has been mixed, it has ſhed, and ſtill ſheds a be-

nign influence, not only upon the virtue and happineſs of individuals, but upon the general ſtate of the world. In Chriſtian countries at leaſt, it has aboliſhed many enormities, mitigated others, and laid, we truſt, a good foundation for the extenſion of that univerſal benevolence, which it was the great object of its author to enforce and eſtabliſh. In a word, it has enlarged and brightened the views of reaſon; confirmed and enlivened the hopes of nature; improved and exalted the lot of humanity. As to its effects upon individuals, many of you know from your own experience, that it is the genuine tendency of its truths and promiſes, to ſooth the breaſt of the penitent; to elevate the devotion of the pious; to animate the virtue of the juſt; to comfort and encourage the heart of the afflicted. Finally, you know, that its principles are of powerful efficacy to check the impetuoſity of paſſion; to harmonize and enlarge the human affections; to give ſtrength to every generous purpoſe of the ſoul, and to prepare it, by habits of piety and virtue, for the employments and delights of a higher ſtate of being. Such is Chriſtianity, as you are taught it in the writings of evangeliſts and apoſtles;

apoſtles; and as, I truſt, you have found it from a perſonal experience of its power and influence. Such it is in its origin, ſuch in its ſpirit, ſuch in its tendency. And what is the end of the Chriſtian miniſtry, according to the deſign of the office, on its firſt appointment? Is it not to ſpread the knowledge of its doctrines among the people, and to enſure, as far as human means can enſure, its reception and effect? Is it not to remove, by candid appeal, the cauſes which obſtruct its progreſs, and to open the hearts of men to embrace it in the love thereof? Is it not to preſent, from time to time, ſuch views of this high diſpenſation of divine grace to a ſinful world, as may inſpire ~~them~~ men with love to God, and to one another; as may render them more active in the diſcharge of duty, more impregnable againſt the aſſaults of temptation, more independent of the world with reſpect to happineſs, and more reſigned, in all circumſtances, to the appointments of infinite wiſdom? Is it not, in ſhort, to lead the weary and heavy laden to thoſe ſources of never failing conſolation, which mitigate the evils of mortality; and to make them triumph in the thought, that they ſhall quit ere long this vale of tears, to follow

thoſe good men, who have been their guides in the way of wiſdom, and are their fore-runners to the manſions of glory?

This, with the office of conducting the public devotion of the people, is the great work of the Chriſtian miniſtry. That this work is performed, even where it is beſt performed, by feeble inſtruments, and in a very imperfect manner, is readily admitted. That the mode might be improved, and the effect heightened, may be true; but it is hardly credible, that any man, who views the work itſelf, in its true nature and intention, can ſeriouſly deny its importance and utility. Will he not rather find reaſon to admire in this, as in every thing elſe, the ſuperiority of the ſcheme of the goſpel? Other religions had prieſts—ſo much the worſe. But they had no public teachers to inſtruct the people in divine truth, and inculcate the practice of moral virtue. The ſcanty and imperfect knowledge, that the world poſſeſſed on theſe ſubjects, with the exception of abſurd fables, which amuſed and deluded ignorance, was confined ſolely to the ſchools of philoſophy, where very few could reach it, and where, to the great body of the people, it was altogether unattainable.

able. Under the Chriſtian diſpenſation, on the contrary, ſabbaths are conſecrated to religious and moral inſtruction, and ſchools are opened in which the poor have the goſpel preached. And, with all the diſadvantages, under which the inſtitution labours, it is not without a conſiderable effect in communicating valuable knowledge, confirming religious impreſſions, and promoting the conſolation and improvement of the human heart. If then it were more generally in good hands, and under good regulations, how extenſive and beneficial might its influence prove in advancing the intereſts of truth, the peace of ſociety, and the higheſt happineſs of rational and immortal beings? And who will ſay, (thoſe only excepted, who judge of things from their abuſe, not from their nature and tendency) who elſe will ſay, that men, who with conſcientious endeavours, and the beſt intentions, devote their time and talents to promote the ends of ſuch an inſtitution, are not entitled, for their work's ſake, to the reſpect of the wiſe and virtuous? Who will ſay, that the man, and ſuch a man ſome of you have known and will long remember—who, with ſtrong reaſon, impreſſive illuſtration, and

gentle perſuaſion, inculcates the love of God and goodneſs; that man who tears from faſhionable Vice the veil that hides her deformity, and preſents unfaſhionable Virtue in ſuch features of beauty, and with ſuch graces of attraction, as make her appear moſt amiable to the wiſe, and an object of reſpect even to the wicked; that man, who poſſeſſes and employs the happy art of transfuſing the pious ſentiments of his own heart into the hearts of others, and of wafting the beſt affections of nature to heaven and eternity;—that man, to ſay no more, who, by enlightening faith and enlivening hope, contributes always in ſome degree, often in a high degree, to tame ferocious nature, to reſtrain malignant paſſions, and to bend the mind to gentleneſs, peace, and philanthropy—who will ſay, that the man, who employs the energies of his intellect, and the zeal of his heart in labours like theſe, does no ſervice to ſociety, or has no claims upon its eſteem? Nay, where is the judgment ſo perverted as not to admit, that he ſerves his fellow-creatures in their higheſt intereſts, and is therefore entitled to a proportionable ſhare of gratitude and veneration.

But

But what is the nature of this veneration? In what does that high eſteem conſiſt, which the apoſtle exhorts Chriſtians to bear towards thoſe, who are their guides to ſpiritual wiſdom? The kind of eſteem which different men bear to the miniſters, or thoſe who call themſelves the miniſters of Chriſt, depends upon the views of the office, which they reſpectively entertain. Stateſmen, and, if we may judge from appearances that do not ſeem doubtful, a great majority among the higher claſſes of ſociety connected with them and dependent upon them, ſeem to conſider Chriſtianity itſelf merely as a convenient engine of civil policy. That kingdom, which its prince declared was not of this world, is regarded by them as of this world only; and when we hear them, as now and then we do, profeſſing a loud and warm zeal for its intereſts, we may conclude full ſurely, that a nearer, and with them a higher intereſt, is the real object. To promote ſome worldly purpoſe, they ſometimes raiſe a cry againſt that infidelity, to the ſuſpicion of which they are themſelves too juſtly expoſed; and become, on a ſudden, wonderfully anxious about the ſafety of that religion, to which, at any other time,

or in any other way, they do not pay even the decent outward reſpect, which public opinion, and their own political views, might ſeem to render neceſſary, on the mere ground of worldly wiſdom. Need we wonder that ſuch men ſhould value the miniſters of religion collectively, juſt as they value religion itſelf, as convenient inſtruments for the advancement and ſupport of their own power? Need we wonder, that the reſpect, which they pay to individuals among them, ſhould be paid chiefly, not to humility, diligence, and zeal, in the diſcharge of the paſtoral office, but to the dexterity and talents, which theſe individuals diſcover, in the general ſcramble for worldly preferment? That this is the caſe in fact, you may know from hiſtory and obſervation; and a very little reflection may convince you, that it ever will be the caſe as long as rich eſtabliſhments of religion, incorporated in whatever form with ſyſtems of civil policy, ſhall continue to exiſt *.

There

* The author is inimical, from conviction, to all civil eſtabliſhments of religion. He thinks them not only inconſiſtent with the principles of Chriſtianity, but deſtructive, in a great meaſure, of that ſalutary influence, which genuine

There are others who run into an oppoſite extreme, who ſeem to think that religious teachers ſhould utterly renounce the world in which

genuine Chriſtianity is calculated to produce upon the virtue and happineſs of man. Some good they have produced. Where was there ever an inſtitution ſo defective, or ſo vicious, that has not?—But all the good, and much more, may be obtained in a better way; whilſt the evils ariſing from them are in magnitude incalculable, and in effect permanent and extenſive. Unfortunately they were not only the cauſe of great ignorance, oppreſſion, and miſery, whilſt they continued powerful enough to repreſs inquiry; but are, as the author firmly believes, one great ſource of that infidelity and libertiniſm, which have been ſpreading ſo rapidly, ſince inquiry has delivered itſelf, in ſome meaſure, from the ſlaviſh ſhackles of civil and eccleſiaſtical authority. The grounds of this belief, to the author at leaſt, appear ſtrong and numerous, if this were the proper place for bringing them forward.

But whilſt this is his opinion of eſtabliſhments themſelves, he hopes he ſhall ever be ready to appreciate juſtly the worth, and the uſefulneſs of thoſe men, under every eſtabliſhment, who faithfully employ their talents, and exertions, for the edification and comfort of the people. Becauſe we cannot do all the good we wiſh, we ſhould labour the more zealouſly to do all we can, and heartily bid God ſpeed to every honeſt attempt for the promotion of good, whether it is made upon our own or any other plan. Men always have differed, and to a certain degree always will differ, about the fitteſt means of obtaining the ſame end. But with reſpect to the end itſelf, in the preſent caſe, there can, among good men, be no difference,

and

which they live; at leaſt, that they ſhould neither think, nor feel, nor act in it like other human beings. It is very poſſible, and not very

and whilſt they are united in their great view of teaching and inculcating the principles and practice of religion and morality, they ſhould not ſuffer their differences about the mode to break in upon that charity, which is the bond of perfectneſs.

The author himſelf was educated in an eſtabliſhment. Some of his beſt friends, the friends of his youth, are members of the eſtabliſhments, both in England and Scotland. With theſe he has lived, and truſts he ever ſhall live, on terms of the ſtricteſt intimacy, however he may differ from them on religious or political ſubjects. He is free to confeſs, that he had given little attention to the queſtion of religious eſtabliſhments, till he was thrown among the Diſſenters of this country. His preſent opinion is the reſult of an inveſtigation, into which he was led by particular circumſtances, and which, it is probable, he might not have purſued either carefully or impartially, if he had remained in his native country. This ſhould teach, and he hopes has taught him candour. He is fully perſuaded, both from what he knows, and from what he may reaſonably conjecture, that a large proportion of the members of every eſtabliſhment, are in the ſame ſituation in which he was himſelf.

In ſuch caſes, if they have not acquired liberal views on other ſubjects, ſometimes even when they have, they are very apt to think, that he who is an enemy to eſtabliſhments, muſt needs be an enemy to religion. Such raſh judgments, when they proceed from narrow views,

very uncommon, for ſelfiſhneſs and hypocriſy to profit by this laſt opinion, as well as by the former. And it ſhould not be diſguiſed, that men are found, among Diſſenters eſpecially, where the temptations of this kind are ſtrongeſt, who under the maſque of a ſancti-

views, and not from intereſted policy, ought never to leſſen our ſenſe of the general worth and uſefulneſs of thoſe who paſs them; much leſs to excite, in thoſe upon whom they are paſt, a ſpirit of retaliation. But when violent temporary profeſſions of religion are belied by the general conduct of thoſe who make them, charity itſelf is under the reluctant neceſſity of queſtioning their ſincerity, and of tracing them to their proper motives. Our Saviour's rule muſt in ſuch caſes be applied. By their fruits they muſt be known. But in all caſes, where private character is conſiſtent with public profeſſion, however ſtrongly we may condemn the opinion, we cannot think too candidly of the perſon. At the ſame time candour muſt not be ſuffered to degenerate into indifference about important truth. The intereſts of truth require an open avowal, and a ſteady defence. Reſpect for good men muſt not leſſen our enmity againſt bad inſtitutions, any more than bad inſtitutions ſhould leſſen our reſpect for good men, who approve and ſupport them. Leaſt of all ſhould inſtitutions, intrinſically excellent and ſalutary, be condemned in the groſs, on account of others, which have been unhappily incorporated with them, and, by a forced unnatural union with which, their beauty has been defaced and their utility leſſened.

monious

monious appearance, and with the cant of an unnatural and overſtrained piety, creep, (it is the appoſite expreſſion of our apoſtle)—creep into houſes, and lead aſtray ſilly women. They have their reward. They have the eſteem of thoſe whom they delude. But it is an eſteem, which a mind of any dignity, far from ſtooping to court, will diſdain to receive. Not that ſuch a mind will deſpiſe the honeſt reſpect of piety, even when accompanied with ignorance and error. This were pride, not dignity. But it will not be accepted upon falſe pretences. A good man will endeavour to enlighten this reſpect; to place it upon its proper foundation, and to employ the influence which it gives, for the edification of the weak, not for his own intereſt or vain glory. He will never hold himſelf up as a kind of ſuperior being, poſſeſſing ſome peculiar influence with the Deity. He will never in any way encourage the belief, that he is capable of promoting the ſalvation of thoſe, who confide in the power of his miniſtry, by any ſecret magic in his prayers, or his preaching; nor will he ever affect, as ſome do, an uncommon indifference to the intereſts of the world, in order to advance theſe intereſts more

ſurely, by firſt gaining eſteem, and then abuſing confidence. No—Theſe arts cannot be ſucceſsful with the intelligent; and when they ſucceed with the ignorant, they are, I do not merely ſay, unworthy of a Chriſtian miniſter, but utterly degrading to the human character. That miniſter or man, who employs them, be his creed or party what it may, ſhould not be the object of your eſteem, but of your ſuſpicion and precaution. Indeed the feeling excited in unenlightened minds, by ſuch arts as theſe, is not rightly denominated eſteem. It is that blind reverence, that ſtupid admiration, which Superſtition pays her prieſts, and by the influence of which her prieſthood is ſupported;—a reverence, upon which wiſdom looks with contempt, and benevolence with compaſſion, and which Chriſtianity and its primitive teachers wholly rejected. On the contrary, the eſteem, which a good man, employed in the miniſtry, will covet, and which a generous people, profiting by his miniſtry, will not withhold, ariſes not from the belief of any ſupernatural endowments, or any peculiar ſanctity belonging to religious teachers; theſe they do not ~~profeſs~~ possess—but from the conviction, that they conſcientiouſly exert their

their talents, ſuch as they are, for the advancement of truth and virtue, of the preſent peace and future ſalvation of men. Now a degree of this eſteem is due to every one, who uprightly endeavours to promote this important object. But it is when talents and zeal are united, when a cultivated underſtanding, and energetic powers of mind, give vigour and effect to honeſt labour, and when both are adorned and recommended by a good life; it is then, that the claim of a Chriſtian miniſter to reſpect and affection riſes to its higheſt pitch. It is then that, regarding him at once, as our own friend, and the friend of God and truth, we look up to him with a mixture of complacence, veneration, and gratitude. It is then that we not only eſteem him, but eſteem him highly, nay very highly, for his work's ſake. This is the eſteem which knowledge pays to worth; which the zealous exerciſe of good talents in a good cauſe will ever enſure from good men; the rational, willing eſteem, which the apoſtle recommends in our text; that kind of eſteem, (can I better deſcribe it to your judgment or your feelings?) with which ſome of you long regarded the perſon, and are now regarding the

the memory of Dr. James Fordyce, whoſe death has led me into this train of thinking, and who carries with him to the grave your affections and regrets. I ſay—regrets. For when a connexion, that we cheriſhed, is broken; when the man whom we venerated leaves the precincts of mortality, it is natural for the heart to heave a ſigh. Another, from among the few in whom our ſouls delighted, has gone to his fathers, and left us in the wilderneſs to mourn his loſs. One of the excellent of the earth is removed. The number of the wiſe is diminiſhed; and he who ſought out acceptable words to adorn virtue, to animate devotion, and waft the ſoul to heaven, is numbered with the ſilent dead. Under ſuch impreſſions the heart is ſad. What muſt be its feelings, where ties of a ſtronger and more tender kind are diſſolved; where kindred ſpirits are ſeparated, whoſe union was the union of love and virtue, ſtrengthened by time and mutual endearments? God of compaſſion, bind up this broken heart! and let the ſuggeſtions of reaſon, and the conſolations of religion, temper and mitigate the bitterneſs of grief. When the firſt emotions have ſpent themſelves, theſe ſuggeſtions

will

will not be diſregarded. It will then be admitted, that the death of a good man crowned, as Dr. Fordyce was, with an honourable old age, but encompaſſed with many bodily infirmities, and ſuffering much bodily pain, cannot be conſidered as in itſelf a ſubject of regret, however it may be ſo far a ſeaſon to the feelings of affection. Should it not rather be matter of joy, that his ſufferings have been cut ſhort; that he has not known the evils of a life protracted to the utmoſt limit of old age; that he has finiſhed his courſe, exhauſted indeed in corporeal ſtrength, but with powers of mind yet vigorous and unimpaired? May we not rejoice too, that by thus poſſeſſing his faculties to the laſt, he had opportunities of bearing a more unſuſpected teſtimony to the excellence and efficacy of thoſe truths, which he had ſo long recommended to others; from which he ſought and received ſupport himſelf amidſt the pains of ſickneſs, and in the proſpect of diſſolution, and on which he reſted with confidence his hopes of immortality? This teſtimony, during his illneſs, he did often bear, as might have been expected, with ſteadineſs, but without oſtentation; with that cheerfulneſs of ſpirit,

and

and fervour of expreſſion, by which his converſation on religious ſubjects was ever diſtinguiſhed. There was indeed a ſenſeleſs ſtory lately propagated, malignant in its intention, but harmleſs in its effect, becauſe it was confuted by its own abſurdity. It was ſaid, that this wiſe and good man, after having explained and enforced the doctrine of Chriſtianity forty years as a public teacher; after having continued to recommend them in his writings, and adorn them by his private life, when growing infirmities put an end to his public labours;—it was ſaid—what will not the zeal of Infidelity ſay?—That he had abjured the principles in which he gloried through a life of ſeventy-ſix years, and gone over at the cloſe of this life, to the ſide of unbelief.

Ye apoſtles of a wretched ſyſtem, that would extinguiſh the cheering light, which Chiſtianity has ſhed upon the ways of Providence and the deſtiny of man, and ſend him back to the darkneſs of conjecture, or the glimmering probabilities of natural religion;—ye, who would deprive the guilty of that mediation, which gives confidence towards God, and the juſt man of that hope,

which brightens his proſpect of futurity, and animates his ſoul, even amidſt the ſtruggles of expiring life,— will ye not be ſatisfied with the conqueſts ye are daily making among the young, the giddy, and the diſſipated? conqueſts generally as deſtructive to them, as they are diſgraceful to you;—muſt ye alſo number in your party, and that without their own leave, thoſe venerable men, who have grown grey themſelves in the ways of wiſdom, and been the inſtruments beſides of making many wiſe unto ſalvation? I wonder not. It would be an acceſſion of ſtrength, which might well excite your exultation. But take care leſt the ſame precipitation, with which ye change your own opinions, ſhould lead you to ſpread reports of changes in the opinions of others, which have happened only in your imaginations. Ye are diſappointed; for who hath believed your report? Who could believe, that a man, who had early inquired into the foundation of his faith, and felt it more firm, the more minutely he examined it;—who had not only that evidence which begets aſſurance for the truth of the Goſpel; but the experience of ſo many years to convince him

of its happy influence, both in the way of virtue and of conſolation;—who could believe that ſuch a man ſhould find reaſon to quit his ſtrong hold for immortality, when he ſaw himſelf on the point of retiring from mortal things, and mortal connexions? But this ſtory, which has been circulated with ſome induſtry, is not confuted merely by its own improbability. Happily we know from the teſtimony of friends, who ſaw him but a little while before his death, that he rejoiced with joy unſpeakable, and full of glory, in the faith and hope of the Goſpel; and that through the influence of this faith and hope he was not only patient in tribulation; but tranquil, but cheerful, amidſt the ravages of diſeaſe, the decay of ſtrength, and the proſpect of diſſolution.

I will read you an extract of a letter received from him by a friend in April laſt.

" When we recollect the name and family
" of ————, with certain other indivi-
" duals, and the intereſting hours we often
" paſt with them, a ſigh will eſcape us for
" pleaſures that can return no more. I am
" miſtaken. When a ſhort period has rolled
" away, they will return with tenfold ad-

" vantage in a nobler ſtate of being, and
" ſubject neither to interruption nor change.
" Such is your faith and mine. How con-
" ſoling! How triumphant! Nor will you
" place it to the account of preſumption or
" vain-glory, when I ſubjoin that I have at
" no point of time found reaſon to queſtion
" the truth of thoſe divine doctrines I had
" the honour to preach for forty years, or
" their power to ſupport the human mind
" under the heavieſt trials. I ſpeak from
" experience. I had ſuffered much before
" you knew me. I met with ſufficient
" ſhocks in the courſe of our mutual ac-
" quaintance. I have endured yet more
" ſince we parted. I will not pain you
" with the detail. But when I mention,
" that I have loſt my only brother and
" earlieſt friend; that I have been forced
" into a vexatious, expenſive, and arduous
" law ſuit, not yet terminated, and that
" both Mrs. Fordyce and myſelf have been
" repeatedly at the gates of death, you will
" admire with me the efficacy of that ſub-
" lime ſyſtem, by which I have been till
" this moment enabled to truſt in God,
" and ſtill to look forward with comfort,

" and

" and hope. I am certainly much debili-
" tated by the growing infirmities of old
" age, with the addition of nervous, and
" paralytic complaints; though when the
" ſtate of the weather permits, I take my
" walks frequently as uſual.—Since I am
" playing the egotiſt, a practice too common
" with people advanced in life, what ex-
" cites my particular gratitude to the pre-
" ſerver of mine, is this, that if I am not
" deceived by my friends here, the faculties
" he gave me, ſuch as they were, are not im-
" paired, but, ſtrange as it may ſeem, ra-
" ther the contrary. For myſelf, I can
" ſcarcely believe it. But your friend Hen-
" rietta, the ſincereſt of women, and not
" the leaſt diſcerning, inſiſts upon it among
" the reſt. If the fact is ſo, it helps, as I
" ſometimes think, to explain the words of
" my favourite ſaint and orator, 'While the
" outward man periſheth, the inward man is
" renewed day by day."

Attend to this, ye abettors of infidelity, and reſpect the rational triumph of a rational faith. Behold it, ye young, and ſuffer not yourſelves to be led away by the deluſions of a ſyſtem, which has no principles of ſufficient

efficacy to preſerve you from the ſnares of vice, and no hopes like theſe to animate your hearts, when you are overtaken by misfortune, or caſt upon the bed of languiſhing.

Attend, ye aged, and be encouraged to go on rejoicing, through what yet remains of your mortal race; that after having followed the faith, and cheriſhed the memory, and ſhared in the conſolations of thoſe who have guided your youth in the paths of virtue, you may hereafter be partakers of their ſociety and their joys in the regions of eternal friendſhip.

Of the life of Dr. Fordyce I can ſpeak only in a very general and unſatisfactory way, having neither had leiſure nor materials to enable me to be particular. Thoſe who knew him, knew his life to be honourable and uſeful;—not without its vexations, of which he had his ſhare, and ſome of the cauſes of which, though perhaps unavoidable, muſt, to a heart of ſenſibility like his, have been greatly diſtreſſing.

He was born at Aberdeen, of very reſpectable parents, who had the ſingular fortune of tranſmitting ſuperior talents to almoſt every individual of a numerous family. The father

father was much eſteemed, and had more than once held the office of chief magiſtrate in his native town. The mother, as we know from the teſtimony of others, as well as of thoſe who were naturally partial to her memory, was a woman of excellent ſenſe, amiable temper, and exemplary piety*. The Doctor

* David Fordyce, another of her children, a man of excellent genius, and uncommon ardour, in the purſuit of knowledge, and known to the literary world by his Dialogues on Education; The Art of Preaching; a ſhort but elegant Treatiſe on Morals in Dodſley's Preceptor, and the Temple of Virtue, has paid the following tribute to her memory in the laſt of theſe works, which was poſthumous, and publiſhed by his brother, whilſt at Alloa.

" The firſt perſon whom the baſhful uſher introduced, was a comely old woman of a moſt decent appearance. Purity and ſweetneſs were ſo tempered in her, as to create at once reſpect and confidence, whilſt they ſhone out in an eminent degree through all her looks and demeanour. When preſented to the goddeſs, the paleneſs of age could not conceal a candid bluſh which overſpread her cheeks, as the *Recorder* read aloud the following encomium of her, that her earlieſt youth was diſtinguiſhed by an affectionate piety to God and her parents, accompanied with a ſobriety of mind, and ſedateneſs of manners, uncommon at that period of life: That being married very young to an elderly gentleman of good fortune and great worth,

Doctor never mentioned her name but with veneration; and to the impreſſions which he received from a woman of ſuch a ſpirit, he was probably indebted for that early and ſtrong

but of a warm temper, ſhe had improved his circumſtances by her prudent management, and ſubdued his paſſion by a ſuperior mildneſs and ſingular diſcretion: That ſhe had reared a numerous family with the moſt tender care, and ſtudied, by her inſtructions and example, to inſpire them with an early attachment to RELIGION and VIRTUE: That, by a winning converſation and well conducted indulgence, ſhe had engaged them to love her as their *Friend*, no leſs than to reverence her as their *Parent*: that after her huſband's death, which happened when the moſt of them were young, ſhe had watched over their intereſts with unwearied attention, given them a liberal education, and ſettled them in uſeful and honourable ſtations: that ſuch of them as were now at a diſtance from her, ſhe continued to counſel, and to confirm in the principles of their education, by a regular epiſtolary correſpondence, in which ſhe wrote her *Heart* with a ſimplicity and a dignity ſeldom equalled: in fine, that ſhe was venerated by her ſervants, beloved by her friends, bleſt by the poor, to whom ſhe was indeed a mother, and applauded by all that knew her unaffected goodneſs.

" On hearing this ample atteſtation, VIRTUE beheld her with particular regard, and ſaid, ' Excellent woman! thou haſt been happy in the beſt of parents, the kindeſt of huſbands, and the moſt dutiful of children.

And

ſtrong predilection, which he diſcovered for the office of the Chriſtian Miniſtry, as well as for that devout caſt of mind, which continued unimpaired to the lateſt hour of his life.

Having acquired the foundation of claſſical knowledge at the grammar ſchool of Aberdeen, and completed a regular courſe of ſtudy both in philoſophy and divinity at the Mariſchal College in the ſame place, he was licenſed when very young, according to the forms of the church of Scotland, to be a preacher of the Goſpel, and was ſettled ſoon after as one of the miniſters of Brechian, in the county of Angus. After remaining there ſome years, he received a preſentation to the pariſh of Alloa, near Stirling, the inhabitants of which were prepoſſeſſed in favour of another miniſter, whom they knew,

And long ſhalt thou continue happy in thy family, enjoying for many years the higheſt felicity that can reach a parent's ſoul, that of ſeeing them proſperous in their different ſpheres of action, and eſteemed by the wiſe and worthy. Having reaped this natural recompenſe in the preſent world, *thy Labour of Love* ſhall not be forgotten in the future, to which thou ſhalt be gathered in a good old age, full of conſolation, and ripe for immortality."

and

and prejudiced againſt the Doctor, whom they did not know. He entered upon this charge, therefore, under a conſiderable degree of popular odium. But this odium he ſoon overcame, not more by the able and impreſſive manner in which he conducted the public ſervices of the ſabbath, than by the amiable and condeſcending ſpirit, with which he performed the more private duties of viſiting, and catechiſing in the different diſtricts of his pariſh,—duties, which, as they uſed to be performed by the Scotch clergy, contributed much more than preaching to the religious inſtruction of the lower claſſes of the people, and eſtabliſhed that kind of connexion between them and their miniſters, which enabled the latter, on various occaſions, to make deep and laſting impreſſions upon the minds of the former, and to render them in conſequence more ſober, more induſtrious, and more pious, than the ſame claſſes of the community are in any other part of the iſland. No one knew better how to avail himſelf of the advantage of this mode of inſtruction, than Dr. Fordyce. By his attention and aſſiduity in this, and the other duties of his miniſtry, he gained ſo much upon the eſteem

eſteem and affection of his pariſhioners, that prejudice gave place to admiration. Their attachment ſoon became unbounded, and when he left them afterwards to ſettle in London, his removal occaſioned univerſal regret. This attachment was mutual; and it was owing only, as I have heard the Doctor ſay, to the preſſing ſolicitation of near relations, and the natural deſire of living among them, with the hope that his uſefulneſs, upon the whole, might be rather increaſed than diminiſhed, that he left a pariſh where he was reſpected and beloved, and where that love and reſpect enabled him to fulfil, with ſo much pleaſure and advantage, the important ends of his chriſtian miniſtry.

It was during his reſidence at Alloa, that he firſt diſtinguiſhed himſelf as an author by the ſucceſſive publication of three ſermons. One upon the Eloquence of the Pulpit, was annexed to the "Art of Preaching, by his brother David." Another upon the Methods of Promoting Edification by Public Inſtitutions, was preached at the Ordination of the Rev. Mr. Gibſon at St. Ninians, a neighbouring pariſh, in the year 1754, and publiſhed, with the charge and notes, in 1755.

The

The third, upon the deluſive, and perſecuting Spirit of Popery, was preached the ſame year before the Synod of Perth, and Stirling, and ſhortly after its publication, came to a ſecond edition. Theſe ſermons were all good in their kind, and all deſervedly attracted notice. But that which moſt ſtrongly arreſted the attention, both of the audience, before which it was delivered, and of the public, to which it was given from the preſs in 1760, was his ſermon on the folly, infamy, and miſery of unlawful pleaſure, preached before the General Aſſembly of the Church of Scotland. The picture, which was exhibited in this ſermon, of the wretched effects of unlawful pleaſure, was evidently drawn by the hand of a maſter. The ſpirit and elegance of the compoſition; the ſolemnity, animation, and feeling, with which it was delivered, produced, as I have heard, a very ſtriking impreſſion upon a numerous congregation both of miniſters and laymen of the firſt reſpectability, and raiſed the preacher to an unrivalled pre-eminence among his brethren in Scotland, as a pulpit orator.

It was about this time, perhaps on occaſion of this ſermon, that its author received the

the degree of doctor of divinity from the univerſity of Glaſgow; and if there is yet any thing honourable in academical titles, proſtituted as they have been by an undiſtinguiſhing diſtribution, the honour could have been conferred on no man, in the church to which he then belonged, with greater propriety, than on James Fordyce.

In 1760 he was unanimouſly invited, by the ſociety of Proteſtant Diſſenters worſhipping in this place, to be co-paſtor with, and eventually ſucceſſor to Dr. Lawrence, then aged and infirm; upon whoſe death, which happened ſoon after, he became ſole paſtor, and continued to diſcharge the duties of that office till Chriſtmas 1782, when his health, which had long been declining, rendered it neceſſary in his own opinion, and that of medical men, to diſcontinue his public ſervices. He had not preached long at Monkwell Street, when his pulpit talents attracted general attention, and procured him general admiration. The number of the ſociety was rapidly increaſed, and he preached for ſeveral years, with the powers of eloquence, and the fervour of piety, to an audience always crowded, often overflowing.

When

When a preacher obtains, with or without merit, an uncommon ſhare of popularity, a conſiderable proportion of his hearers will ever conſiſt of thoſe, who are guided in their choice rather by curioſity and faſhion, than by ſound judgment, or ſteady principles of religion. The attachments of ſuch people are as capricious and variable as their minds; and they change their preachers as they change their dreſs,—not from their own taſte;—in general they have none;—but from the deſire of being where others are; of doing what others do, and of admiring what others admire.

No wiſe man will reckon much upon ſuch followers. Dr. Fordyce appreciated juſtly the value of their approbation, and knew it eventually from experience. But he was more than compenſated for the loſs of hearers of this deſcription by the ſteady adherence, and undiminiſhed affection of others, whoſe eſteem was moſt deſirable, becauſe it was grounded upon the dictates of a ſound underſtanding. Theſe found, that his public ſervices, inſtead of ſuffering any abatement of excellence, were rendered more valuable

by

by that growing experience and matured judgment, which are the reſult of years and reflexion. They will recollect with pleaſure, as long as they live, the important matter of which his diſcourſes were compoſed, the impreſſive manner in which they were delivered, and the ſtriking effect which they frequently produced. They will recollect how admirably he unfolded the great ſcheme of revelation; how ſublimely he deſcribed the dignity, and how tenderly the condeſcenſion, of that divine perſon by whom it was completed; with what perſpicuity he explained the nature of duty, and with what energy he enforced its practice; with what powers of perſuaſion he allured the young to the love of virtue; with what ſolemnity he warned them againſt the danger of diſſipation and irreligion, to which they were expoſed in a licentious age and luxurious city. Theſe things, and many more, which your time forbids me to enlarge upon, will be remembered with a melancholy ſatisfaction by thoſe who enjoyed the happineſs and the advantage of his public miniſtrations. I will only add, in relation to one of his public

ſervices,

ſervices, which regarded myſelf *, that I wiſh I could as well fulfil the intention of it, as I recollect the admirable ſpirit and ability with which it was compoſed, and which render it, in this ſpecies of compoſition, unrivalled and invaluable.

It may not be improper to remark in this place, that the effect of Dr. Fordyce's public diſcourſes was much heightened not only by an action, and an elocution, which he ſtudied with care and practiſed with ſucceſs; but by the figure of his perſon, which in the pulpit was peculiarly dignified, and by the expreſſion of his countenance, which was animated at all times, but animated moſt of all when lighted up by the ardour of his ſoul in

* The Charge delivered at the Author's Ordination in Monkwell Street, the 21ſt of May 1783. The Rev. Dr. Hunter, of London Wall, to whoſe reputation, either as a preacher or a writer, the author's praiſe can add nothing, reprinted this Charge ſome time ago, with Dr. Fordyce's conſent, together with his own diſcourſe on the ſame occaſion, in a collection of excellent Sermons, which Dr. Hunter had printed ſeparately before, and in giving which to the public in a more permanent form, with the illuſtrations and memoirs that accompany them, he has not only gratified his private friends, but made a valuable addition to the ſtock of Engliſh Sermons.

the

the ſervice of God and truth. It was obſerved by his hearers, that, on many occaſions, he ſeemed not merely to ſpeak, but to look conviction to the heart.

His eye indeed was particularly bright and penetrating, and he had carefully attended to the effect, which an orator may often produce upon an audience, by the judicious uſe of this little, but invaluable organ.

It would be unneceſſary to enumerate, and in me preſumptuous to criticiſe before this congregation, the writings of your late excellent and much lamented paſtor. They have been extenſively read, generally approved, and ſome of them tranſlated into ſeveral European languages. In point of elegance and taſte, they are excelled by few; in point of moral tendency, by none; and when I have ſaid this, I need add nothing more, but that I wiſh a complete edition of his works were printed, and that every perſon, eſpecially every young perſon in my hearing, were acquainted with them. With reſpect to his theological ſentiments, they were in no extreme;—liberal, as I account them; but perhaps not ſuch as would be deemed worthy of that character by ſome

in our day, who are outrageous for liberality *.

His mind, however, held on in that progreſs, which an inquiſitive mind generally does.

* No invidious inſinuation is intended againſt a particular deſcription of Chriſtians. Worth, candour, and piety, are not confined to a ſect. The author has friends, whom he honours, among men of all deſcriptions, and he conſiders all as his brethren in Chriſt, who love Chriſt in truth, whatever may be their peculiar notions, either of his perſon or his doctrine.—But he hates bigotry in every ſect;—and in an *Unitarian* more, if poſſible, than in a *Trinitarian*.

Thoſe excluſive appropriations of all that is rational, and liberal, which are made by individuals of the one perſuaſion, appear to him as intolerable, and much more inconſiſtent, than the excluſive and unwarrantable pretenſions to orthodoxy, which are ſo often advanced by the adherents of the other.

Much allowance is due to the prejudices of an honeſt bigot, who is ſuch from education, and from the natural tendency of his theological ſyſtem. But he is entitled to very little quarter, who acts the bigot in oppoſition to all his own maxims, and in defiance of all his own profeſſions. Yet ſuch men there are—men as precipitate, and as harſh in judging the *underſtandings* and *motives* of an opponent, as ſome of *their* opponents are in fixing the deſtiny of *their* ſouls. This is what may be termed, if ſuch a term be admiſſible, the bigotry of liberality, which is, in the author's mind, of all bigotry the moſt

does. His liberality increaſed with his age; yet without any of thoſe very rapid tranſitions in ſentiment, which are the indications of raſh deciſion, rather than of ſober inquiry;—of a light imagination, rather than a ſolid judgment.

But whatever different men thought, or may now think of his religious tenets, of his piety there was, and there could be, only one opinion. It ſhone in all his writings, and in his ſervices in this place, it often roſe, as ſome of you can teſtify, to a ſublime degree of holy fervour. Nor was he one of thoſe, whoſe love to God ſeems to ſwallow up that love to humanity, which it ſhould ſtrengthen and animate; who affect an oſtentatious and noiſy zeal for the ſouls of men, without appearing to feel any concern for their outward ſtate, or bodily comfort. No!

moſt inſufferable; of which, inſufferable as it is, he has ſeen too much, eſpecially among young men, in whom it is leaſt of all becoming, and who would gain in the eſtimation of the truly candid and enlightened, even of their own ſchool, by diſcovering a little more modeſty, not to ſay charity, in the judgments which they paſs upon the opinions and underſtandings of others.

His heart did not glow more warmly with devotion to his God, than with benevolence to his fellow creatures. He believed and rejoiced, that the plans of Providence were maturing, and that rapid approaches were making towards a meliorated ſtate of ſociety. I have heard him expreſs, with all the ardour of generous feeling, his confident, his triumphant hope, that liberty, civil and religious, in connexion with pure chriſtianity, and with that general philanthropy, which it inculcates, will ſpeedily extend her empire, for the improvement, exaltation, and happineſs of human nature.

And whilſt his views were thus benevolent in an enlarged way, his charity was equally conſpicuous, as far as his means admitted, in the relief of private diſtreſs. He was ever ready, within the ſphere of his influence, to encourage thoſe inſtitutions, by which the life of man is preſerved, or his miſeries alleviated, or his comforts increaſed. But a very little before his death, he not only contributed to the ſupport, but wrote an animated recommendation of the Humane Society, juſtly ſo denominated, which

which has been kindly ſent me by Dr. Hawes, the benevolent author, and aſſiduous promoter of that excellent inſtitution. I would read it now, if I had not already treſpaſſed on your patience.

It is natural to ſuppoſe, that with ſuch a character for intellectual and moral endowments, Dr. Fordyce would be known, and valued by literary men of different perſuaſions. Whilſt, among the diſſenters, he was happy in the friendſhip of a Chandler, a Price, a Kippis, and others, he enjoyed, at the ſame time the intimacy and eſteem of many eminent writers, both among the clergy and laity of the eſtabliſhment. By two, in particular, he was highly reſpected, whoſe habits and prepoſſeſſions did not diſpoſe them to think favourably of diſſenting teachers, by Dr. Goldſmith and Dr. Johnſon. The latter, though a bigot in politics and religion, was in many reſpects a great and eſtimable character. Though he hated a whig and a preſbyterian, he valued worth and talents; he did juſtice to the piety and genius of Watts, and he lived in habits of the moſt friendly intercourſe with Dr. Fordyce.

The eſteem was mutual; and the Doctor, ſoon after the death of his friend, paid a ſolemn tribute to his memory, in one of his addreſſes to the Deity; ſome paſſages of which, the following eſpecially, are very applicable to himſelf.

" It hath pleaſed thee, Almighty Diſpoſer, to number with the ſilent dead a man of renown, a maſter in Iſrael, who had the tongue of the learned, and worſhipped thee with fervour in the land of the living. His was the pen of a ready writer. His was the happy power of communicating truth with clearneſs, and inculcating virtue with energy. To him it was given to expoſe with juſt diſcrimination the follies of a frivolous age, and with honeſt zeal to reprobate its vices."

Whilſt Dr. Fordyce was thus connected and eſteemed as a public character, he was in private life highly amiable, and juſtly beloved; and in his domeſtic relations peculiarly tender and affectionate, as his friends well knew, and as his diſconſolate widow will tell with many tears of ſorrow. His converſation was cheerful, pleaſing, and inſtructive; and though his appearance was always dignified, it was never

never auſtere. It was the dignity of virtue, which, far from checking the freedom of converſation, did not even diſcourage the ebullitions of mirth, or lay any unneceſſary reſtraint upon the innocent gaietv of youth.

This cheerfulneſs and complacency of temper, we know from good authority, continued with him to his lateſt hour; as indeed it had always formed a ſtriking feature of that piety, which was ardent as his imagination, rational as his underſtanding, and laſting as his life.

After reſigning the paſtoral care of this ſociety in 1782, he ~~lived~~ spent the greater part of his remaining years at a retirement in Hampſhire, in the neighbourhood of Lord Bute, with whom he lived in great intimacy, and to whoſe valuable library he had free acceſs. Soon after the death of his brother Dr. William, he removed to Bath, where, after ſuffering much from an aſthmatic complaint, to which he had been ſubject many years, and enduring that, and other pains and infirmities incident to age, with a truly Chriſtian ſpirit, he ended his days October 1, in his 76th year, as I truſt you all wiſh to end yours,

with the peace of God in his heart, and the triumphant hope of chriſtianity, to illuminate his future proſpects and diſpel the terrors of impending diſſolution *.

Chriſtians! contemplate this character, thus ſketched with true aim, but feeble execution;—ye chiefly, who can teſtify from knowledge, that the general colouring is not overcharged, and that the particular features are not even touched with ſufficient ſtrength; then ſay, whether ſuch a man of God, ſuch a miniſter of Jeſus Chriſt, was not entitled to your eſteem whilſt he lived; and whether you ought not to cheriſh and to venerate his memory. Let the young, who liſten to theſe remarks, occaſioned by the death of a man, who laboured with peculiar anxiety to form their minds to the love of truth, and to impreſs upon them a juſt conviction of the beauty and utility of virtue—let the young look to the end of ſuch a man, and learn the wiſdom of ſhunning a faſhionable infidelity, which, as we ſaid before, has no principles that can act uniformly, as a preſervative

* For the manner of his death ſee Appendix.

againſt

againſt ſin, and no hopes that can make them meet death, as our departed friend has done. Let them value thoſe, in or out of the miniſtry, who warn them againſt the dangers of impiety and vice, and let them reſolve, with deliberate and firm purpoſe, to be followers of thoſe, who through faith and patience inherit the promiſes.

And let thoſe who are advanced in life be encouraged and animated to perſeverance in that which is praiſe-worthy, by the ſupport and conſolation which ſuch men as Dr. Fordyce ever have, and ever will derive, in the decline of life, and at the hour of death, from confidence in God through Jeſus Chriſt, and from the full aſſurance of a happy immortality.

Let us all go on our courſe, rejoicing in the conſideration, that in due ſeaſon we ſhall reap, if we faint not. And may that God, who raiſes up good men in his church to recommend the cauſe of truth and piety, and removes them by death, when his wiſe and gracious purpoſes are ſerved, to a ſtate of everlaſting honour and felicity,—may this God diſpoſe and enable us to profit by the

life

life and by the death of ſuch men; that when our race is alſo run, our memory may be bleſſed on earth, and our ſouls admitted into the company of the wiſe and good, in the regions of perfect knowledge and perfect joy. Amen.

APPENDIX.

The following Extracts from a Letter of Mrs. Fordyce to a friend, giving an account of the manner and circumſtances of her venerable huſband's death, with a paraphraſe upon the Lord's Prayer, written a very little before that event, cannot fail to be intereſting and acceptable to his friends.

'MY DEAR SIR,

'BEING now able to ſit up, I can only ſay, that had the ſtate of my health, when your laſt ſoothing but affecting letter came to hand, admitted of my writing at all, ſuch a letter from a favourite friend would have impelled me to give it an immediate reply. Accept, dear Sir, of my gratitude for what it contained, eſpecially for that ſympathy I ſo much ſtand in need of: it is the balm of true friendſhip; and though it reaches me from various quarters, ſtill the wound bleeds, and will continue to bleed, till God ſhall heal it by that re-union of ſouls which muſt take place ere long———

'Hardly two people accoſt each other without an eulogium on his character and a ſigh for his death—but

but death it was not—To all human appearance he was tranſlated. We ſpent a moſt agreeable evening together in my dreſſing room, in which he was fond of ſitting, on account of the fine air of the vale behind and the proſpect: for he ſtill kept his reliſh for all that was beautiful in nature. We were both engroſſed with William Cooper's Sermon to the Jews.

'I read the hymns and the pſalms in the little pamplet.—"Ah!" ſaid he, "this carries me back to Monkwell Street, there we ſang it together with my beloved flock; the ſtrain ſhall be *exalted* when next we ſing it." Then turning to me, he ſaid, "We have read enough for to-night—before you call for ſupper, let us have ſome muſic." My niece is a very fine performer: ſhe immediately ſat down to accompany him in ſome of his favourite airs on the forte piano, and a very fine cadence ſhe ſung, ſo delighted him, that he made her do it over again, and turning to me, he ſaid, "How many things have we to be grateful for! The muſical ear is a gift peculiar to ſome, withheld from others; there are many things in life richly to be enjoyed; all that leads up to God, we may delight in; but whatever has no reference to him, we ſhould avoid. There are books called *Religious Offices*, preparations for the *Sacrament*, and preparations for *Death*, &c. but for my own part, I never could think that ſuch preparations conſiſted in times being ſet apart

for offices, and then returning to the world, as having done with heaven for the time being. A man is not truly prepared for death, unleſs by the tenor of his life he feels himſelf ſo wholly given up to God, that his mind is in heaven before he goes hence; and he can only bring himſelf to that, by the perpetual ſilent reference, in all his words, thoughts, and actions, to his Creator, which I have ſo often mentioned to you."—I replied, "That indeed, Doctor, is the teſt, or criterion, to judge himſelf by, for a man dare have no reference or appeal for his actions to God, if his deeds condemn him to his own conſcience."—"God be praiſed," ſaid he, "my beloved Henrietta, that our ſentiments in religion have had ſuch a conformity with each other; it has made a great part of the pleaſure of my life, that you could meet me on theſe ſubjects with reliſh. There are many reſources which remain for you," ſaid he, "if I ſhould leave you. I deſire you may avail yourſelf of them. In addition to religion and the ſcriptures, there are books, friendſhip, and muſic; I could name more, but theſe are ſufficient;—caſt yourſelf on God through your Redeemer. He will care for you, and raiſe you up friends."—I aimed at changing the converſation, and ſaid, trembling, "But you are better, my dear."

"I am certainly eaſier," he replied, "and have had leſs pain and better ſymptoms for two or three weeks paſt; and I aſſure you, my beloved, I am not tired of life at all: for, though the Almighty knows

I have

I have been long ready for the ſummons, yet if it is his pleaſure to let the lamp of life burn on a little longer, I am ſatisfied, and I am his." He ſat his uſual time after ſupper, which he partook of in a moderate way, without any diſreliſh. About eleven he rung for the ſervants, who with my niece and myſelf attended him every night to his bed-chamber. To my unſpeakable joy it ſeemed to coſt him much leſs effort than common, to mount the ſtairs; which formerly was ſo painful a taſk, that at every landing place a chair was ſet for him to reſt on, ere he could aſcend to the next. He joined us all in obſerving with gratitude and wonder, that he ſhould gain more eaſe by living longer. He and I converſed in a very pleaſing ſtyle on various ſubjects till about one o'clock, and then he urged my going to bed, leſt I ſhould be hurt by ſuch late hours; he alſo forbad me to get up in the night (as anxiety about him had often made me do), unleſs I ſhould hear him call me; he made me promiſe I would not, after which we embraced. I left him very happy, comfortable, and ſerene; I might add, even cheerful. We both fell aſleep in our different apartments, but as mine had a door of communication into his, ſo he could not ſtir without my hearing. He awoke about two, and lighted a wax bougie at his lamp, both of which ſtood on a dumb waiter cloſe to his bed, with all his medicines and cordials. He lighted it to take his ethereal ſpirit; but forgetting to blow it out, it took fire in the bunch;

bunch; the ſmell of which awoke him, perhaps in ſome alarm. He then called to me, who was juſt in my firſt ſleep, and ſpringing up eagerly in the dark, I ſtumbled and ſtruck my head againſt the door; the blow for a few minutes ſtunned me, and made me reel in coming up to him. I affected to be well, that he might not be alarmed. "I called to you," my love, "leſt the ſmell of fire which the bougie occaſioned, might have frightened you. You have paid dear for coming to me by this blow." Saying ſo he got up, and calling the women with a firm voice three or four times, they and my niece were all at once with us. I was praying him to return to bed, but he refuſed until he ſhould get me from their hands ſome ſal volatile. He then ſaid, "Are you better?" I anſwered, "O well, well." "God be praiſed!" ſaid he, raiſing his hands, and with the words in his mouth he fell in our arms without a groan, a ſigh, or ſo much as the rattle in the throat. The ſpirit was inſtantly fled, and for ever, to the God that gave it. Such was my faith, that I thought he that formed the ear would hear my cries, and in pity reanimate the venerable clay. They flew different ways, and brought from their beds the phyſician and ſurgeon. They found all had been done that could be done, the feet put in warm water, the body chafed, &c. but all was in vain. He was taken from my arms, who will ever live in my heart, and I ſaw him no more.

Copy

Copy of the Lord's Prayer Paraphraſed.

We, a part of thy rational and immortal offſpring, would lift up our hearts with reverence, affection, and hope to thee our common Father, the Father of mercies, and the friend of mankind; who art from everlaſting to everlaſting, ſelf exiſtent, independent, and ſupreme; ſeated on thy refulgent throne in heaven, where thy divine preſence is more conſpicuouſly and more intimately enjoyed by the happy beings who behold thee. Whilſt we aſpire to join that high aſſembly of celeſtial worſhippers, may a ſenſe of our relationſhip to them, and of our *extraction* from thyſelf the all perfect, make us diſdain every thought of diſhonouring our natures by any thing baſe or mean, and pant after a cloſer reſemblance of our heavenly Father in all that is moſt excellent and lovely. May thine adorable perfections, manifeſted through all thy works and ways, be hallowed by every creature thou haſt made capable of knowing and praiſing thee. May thy glorious kingdom of truth and righteouſneſs come with increaſing ſplendour and efficacy. Be pleaſed to raiſe up and ſend forth inſtruments duly qualified to advance it; and proſper their endeavours for that purpoſe according to the great and precious promiſes of thy word. May thy ſovereign will, infinitely wiſe, righteous, and gracious, be done in all the

the earth, with the ſame readineſs and conſtancy as it is done in heaven by thouſands of thouſands, and ten thouſand times ten thouſand Angelic Beings, who with the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect, ſerve thee day and night, without ceaſing and without wearying, for ever. Having teſtified, as becomes us, the higheſt veneration for *thee*, thou firſt, thou greateſt, and thou beſt, in *preferring thy will to our own*, we are inſtructed next to pray, that thou wouldſt give *us*, thy dependent children, this, and every ſucceeding day of life, our daily bread, and thy bleſſing with it. For we would learn to be contented with a moderate ſupply of our ſtill returning wants, and to enjoy it as coming down from thee, and leading us back to thee, the only ſource and centre of good. Conſcious that we are ſinners, and truſting in thy infinite compaſſion, through the merits and mediation of thy well beloved and only begotten Son, our Saviour and advocate with thee, the Father, we implore thee to forgive us our manifold treſpaſſes againſt thy holy laws, as we forgive our mortal brethren, and are kind to them who treſpaſs againſt us; the *condition* which thou haſt moſt juſtly and moſt mercifully eſtabliſhed, for the ſake of promoting peace and love through thy numerous family. And, in order to prevent our offending thee, or one another, any more, lead us not into circumſtances of temptation too powerful for frail humanity; or if for the puniſhment of paſt tranſgreſ-

 ſions,

ſions, thou ſhouldſt ſee meet to call us to new trials, make a way for us to eſcape, that we be not overcome of them; and as our day is, ſo let our ſtrength be; and oh! grant that the bitter fruits of former folly may prove ſalutary, by humbling our pride, exciting our vigilance, and bringing us nearer to the throne of Grace. But whatever we may at any time endure for the chaſtiſement of our faults, the exerciſe of our faith, or the improvement of our virtue, we beſeech thee to deliver us from all real evil deviſed againſt us by the wicked one, or by thoſe whom malice may inſtigate to occaſion our overthrow. For thine, our Father and our God, is the kingdom of univerſal nature, in which nothing can ultimately hurt thy children; and thine is the power that can make all things work together for their good; and thine is the glory, that accrues and will for ever accrue from the manifeſtation of thy attributes in the final prevalence of purity and happineſs.

AMEN, ſo let it be.

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THE END.